

The Basic Necessities

The Kabbala of shelter, clothing and food

By Yitzchak Ginsburgh



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The absolute definition of man is dependent on the home. In Kabbala, this is called the secret of the Divine *Tzelem*, "Image," in which man was created and in which he walks. As in the verse "Surely every man should walk [i.e., conduct himself] in [His] *likeness* [in Hebrew, "*tzelem*"] ([Psalms 39:7](#)), man is always walking in the aura of the *tzelem*. The word "*tzelem*" is constructed of three letters: *tzadik*, *lamed*, *mem*. The *Arizal* explains that each letter corresponds to a different level of man.

The *tzadik* refers to the "inner light", the "*ohr pnimi*", which, in our context, corresponds to the food, that element of reality which a person integrates in order to derive life force. As in the verse "A *tzadik* eats for the satiation of his soul". ([Proverbs 13:25](#))

The *lamed* is the proximate "aspect of surrounding", representing the "*ohr makeef hakarov*", which in our context corresponds to *clothing*, in Hebrew, "*lvush*", which begins with the letter *lamed*.

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The *mem* is the distant "aspect of surrounding", the "*makeef harachok*". It corresponds to "space", referring to the space in which a man lives. This concept can be developed to include living in Divine Space. The physical space that a person constructs for himself is his home. A person has a physical home, his "Temple," a place to worship G-d, and to become conscious of and united with Him, as a bride and groom. A person's meditation constructs around him a spiritual space.

To summarize:

Mazon	Sustenance	<i>ohr pnimi</i>	<i>Tzadik</i>
Levush	Clothing	<i>Makeef hakarov</i>	<i>Lamed</i>
Bayit	Shelter	<i>Makeef harachok</i>	<i>Mem</i>

To understand this in greater depth, we must reflect on the fact that even though it appears from our above discussion that the highest level is the home, followed by the clothing and then the food, it can be seen in the inverted order. The two different ways of viewing the three basic components are not contradictory. They

complement each other, and ultimately are one and the same.

The food, which gives inner light to the person, is the highest level. This is reflected by the fact that when the Jews were in the desert, they ate *manna*, which was in the merit of Moses. The food is life-force, which enters the being of man. The inner life force is called "*mochin*". Throughout Kabbala, the concept "*mochin*" literally means "brain power". "Brain power" means "life-force". Inner life-force, which derives from the two *sefirot* of *chochma* and *bina*, which are called *Abba* and *Imma*, specifically derives from *Imma*. It is called "*mochin d'Imma*". One's sustenance corresponds to the first *hei* of G-d's name, which is *bina*, *Imma*.

Clothing encompasses man and protects him from the elements.

"Clothing" represents *middot*, character traits. One of the Hebrew words for "clothing" is "*madim*". The very word for the emotive character traits in man, *chesed*, *gevura*, *tiferet*, *netzach hod*, *yesod*, which are the six basic emotions corresponding to the Six Days of

Creation, are called the *madim*, "clothing". Relative to the mind and consciousness itself, the emotions are referred to as "clothing". Very often the soul is referred to as having three layers of clothing: thought, speech and action, which clothe both intelligence and the emotive powers of the heart. According to this, the emotive powers are part of the inner being, or essence, of the soul, whereas the clothing is the way the soul expresses itself, either to itself, as thought, or to the outside world as speech and action. However, since everything is relative in the Torah, the *middot* are called "clothing" relative to the intelligence. This is because the word *middot* also means "clothing" or "uniform." The emotions of the heart are the "uniform" of the intelligence.

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Clothing corresponds to the *vav* of G-d's name, which are the *middot*, i.e. *tiferet*. *Tiferet*, "beauty", is the primary of the *middot*. This relates to the beauty of the clothing. The word "*tiferet*" is used for the clothing

of the High Priest, i.e., "for honor and beauty" - "*I'chavod ul'tiferet*". The purpose of his clothing is to give him *tiferet*. This is another explicit reference in the Torah that clothing relates to *tiferet*, the primary of the *middot*

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The food and minimal protection afforded by clothing enable man to live. However, he is not yet called a "man", as he does not yet possess a home. In Kabbala, the home is always referred to as "*malchut*". For this reason, his home is also called his wife (*Yoma* 2a). The woman represents *malchut* throughout the Torah. The home corresponds to the final *hei* of G-d's name.

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(Parts 3-4 of a series, "the Jewish Home," that appears on the Gal Einai website.)

BY YITZCHAK GINSBURGH



Rabbi Yitzchak Ginsburgh is the founder and director of the [Gal Einai Institute](#): The Institute for Advanced Interdisciplinary Study of Torah, Art and Science. A foremost expositor of Kabbalah and Chassidut, Rabbi Ginsburgh has written over forty books illuminating the Torah's understanding of topics such as psychology, education, medicine, politics, mathematics and relationships.

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